National Park
Drawer 170
Moose, WY 83012
(307) 733-2880

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Grand Teton

BIRD-FINDING GUIDE

Grand Teton National Park encompasses a range of habitats, from alpine meadows to sagebrush flats, from lodgepole pine forests to mountain streams. Birds use habitats which meet their needs for food, water, shelter, and nest sites. Some birds frequent only one habitat type while others occupy a variety of habitats. This guide will acquaint you with some of the habitat types within Grand Teton as well as specific locations to look for birds. Use it in conjunction with *The Birds of Grand Teton National Park* by Bert Raynes and the checklist, *Birds of Jackson Hole*, available at the Moose and Colter Bay Visitor Centers. Please report at a visitor center any sightings of birds listed as rare or accidental.

HABITAT TYPES

Sagebrush Flats Sagebrush covers most of the valley called Jackson Hole. Despite the hot dry conditions existing where sagebrush grows, some species flourish. Look for sage grouse, vesper sparrows, Brewer's sparrows, and sage thrashers.

Lodgepole Pine Forests Lodgepole pine grows in dense forests covering much of the valley and the lower slopes of the mountains. Expect olive-sided flycatchers, yellow-rumped warblers, ruby-crowned kinglets, mountain chickadees, white-crowned and chipping sparrows, and dark-eyed juncos (especially in developed areas within lodgepole forests such as Colter Bay).

Aspens Aspens occur chiefly in pure stands, often on hillsides. Many of the aspen stands in Grand Teton are decadent, with rotting trunks attracting numerous woodpeckers. Saw-whet owls, house wrens, mountain and black-capped chickadees, tree swallows, and violet-green swallows nest in old woodpecker cavities.

Aquatic and Riparian Numerous rivers, creeks, lakes, and ponds provide habitats where Canada geese and other waterfowl nest, and osprey and bald eagles hunt for fish. Common snipe, white-crowned and Lincoln sparrows, yellow and MacGillivray's warblers, and common yellowthroats nest and forage in adjacent wet meadows.

Alpine Above 10,000 feet severe conditions limit vegetation to low-growing forms. Birds that nest above treeline migrate south or to lower elevations for winter. Watch for golden eagles, Clark's nutcrackers, rosy finches, white-crowned sparrows, and water pipits.

Enjoy birds but be a responsible birder. Remember:

- Nesting birds of any species are easily disturbed. If an adult on a nest flies off at your approach, or circles you, or screams in alarm, **you are too close to the nest.** Unattended nestlings readily succumb to predation, heat prostration, and exposure to cold and wet weather.
- Good birding areas often attract other wildlife. Maintain a safe distance (300 feet) from large animals such as moose, bears, and bison, and do not position yourself between a female and her offspring.

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BIRDING HOT SPOTS

Grand View Point. Old growth Douglas firs support Williamson's sapsuckers, red-naped sapsuckers, and other woodpeckers. Common songbirds include mountain chickadees, red-breasted nuthatches, dark-eyed juncos, western tanagers, and Townsend's solitaires. Blue grouse and ruffed grouse nest here. At the summit, look up for red-tailed hawks, white pelicans, and other soaring birds.

Christian Pond. Several species of waterfowl nest here. Look for ruddy ducks, ring-necked ducks, American wigeon, and American coots. A pair of trumpeter swans nests on the pond. **Because close human presence interferes with the swans' nesting effort, remain on the trail on the west side of the pond, at least 200 feet from the edge of the pond, and obey all posted closures.**

Willow Flats. Extensive willow thickets merge with wet grassy meadows. Small creeks and beaver ponds provide riparian and aquatic habitats. Look for cinnamon teal, green-winged teal, and American wigeon in ponds and creeks. Sandhill cranes, northern harriers, American bittern, common snipe, and sora nest here. Calliope hummingbirds feed on scarlet gilia growing below Jackson Lake Lodge. Red-naped sapsuckers and other woodpeckers abound. Frequently seen songbirds include willow flycatchers, cliff swallows, yellow warblers, MacGillivray's warblers, common yellowthroats, Wilson's warblers, fox sparrows, white-crowned sparrows, pine siskins, and yellow-headed blackbirds. Lazuli buntings and green-tailed towhees use the drier hillsides adjacent to Willow Flats.

Oxbow Bend. A slow-moving, cut-off meander of the Snake River, Oxbow Bend supports lush underwater plant growth and abundant fish, food for aquatic birds. Great blue herons and osprey nest here. White pelicans, double-crested cormorants, common mergansers, and bald eagles fish in the shallow water. Because of Oxbow Bend's proximity to Willow Flats, the birdlife is quite similar.

Two Ocean Lake. Western grebes, trumpeter swans, and common mergansers summer on the lake. Western tanagers, pine grosbeaks, Cassin's finches, and other songbirds abound in the open coniferous forests and aspen stands surrounding the lake.

Cascade Canyon. Glaciers gouged out Cascade Canyon thousands of years ago. Today Cascade Creek carries melted snow through conifer forests and meadows of wildflowers, while the Teton peaks tower above. American dippers frequent Cascade Creek near Hidden Falls. Western tanagers, ruby-crowned kinglets, and yellow-rumped warblers nest near the trail. Also look for golden eagles, Steller's jays, gray jays, golden-crowned kinglets, dark-eyed juncos, and occasional Townsend's warblers. Secretive harlequin ducks sometimes nest along the creek.

Taggart Lake Trail. A lightning-caused forest fire burned most of the trees on the glacial moraine surrounding Taggart Lake. Insects feeding on the decaying trees attract woodpeckers. Look for black-backed and three-toed woodpeckers. Abundant insects also attract mountain bluebirds, tree swallows, olive-sided and dusky flycatchers, western wood peewees, and yellow-rumped warblers. Calliope hummingbirds frequently perch in willows near the base of the moraine.

Antelope Flats-Kelly Road. Large hayfields attract raptors which search the fields for abundant small rodents. Look for American kestrels, prairie falcons, red-tailed hawks, Swainson's hawks, and northern harriers. Check fence posts for western meadowlarks, mountain bluebirds, western and eastern kingbirds. Scan irrigated pastures for long-billed curlews.

Phelps Lake Overlook. The trail to the overlook traverses a lateral glacial moraine where mixed conifers and aspens grow today. Because the trail follows a small creek, expect abundant birdlife. Look for western tanagers, MacGillivray's warblers, northern flickers, Lazuli buntings, ruby-crowned kinglets, and green-tailed towhees. Listen for the sweet songs of hermit and Swainson's thrushes. Calliope and broad-tailed hummingbirds feed on scarlet gilia below the overlook.

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